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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## A NEWPORT NURSERY.

THE waywardness of architecture at Newport, in which the unexpected always arrives, prepared me for the unseen portal through which my hostess led me from our walk over the well-kept grounds, and from the wonderful landscape bouquet of hydrangeas, white, pink and blue, the pride of the avenue.

It was a little door—a man would surely have had to remove his hat to pass through it—stowed in an angle behind a circular bay and underneath a jutting cornice, which supported some eccentricity of the second story. It was likewise a curious door. A network of slender iron links screened a panel made of clear glass bull's eyes. Above—for the door had Gothic proclivities—the space took the form of a four-leaved clover, each leaf being filled in with cracked jewels of blue, green, gold and red, which sparkled and danced as reflections on the floor within. A miniature vestibule, lined with sea-green tiles, led into a large room. The vault of the vestibule, overlaid with gold, was ornamented with flower-like scrolls in color, and from the centre hung a corona of opalescent jewels and brass. "The Newport climate, and our long stay here, as we value our peace and comfort, make the nursery the most important department of our menage. I am a New England woman, hence I have views. Being a mother, I have views concerning the development of my young children, mentally, morally and physically. As I am a woman of society, I can only give a certain amount of time to my children. The outcome of all this preamble is that I depend on the nursery to carry on my theories when I am not present, and I have organized it to that end to the best of my ability."

This nursery, vested with such a responsible mission, was a large five-sided room, with an annex in a commodious bath-room, panelled with cream enamelled tiles and above a frieze of rushes and other aquatic plants. The apartment was a curious mixture of elegance and cheapness. It soon became apparent that what was enduring was fine, and what was perishable was cheap.

"The framework of this room, you will observe, has come to stay," said my young hostess. "Everything else is transitory and at the mercy of the bairns. The dado is one of those Mother Goose papers, and serves as a perpetual story-book for the babies. The wooden border I have had project, for one reason, because the toddlers can make the tour of the room by its help and also because it serves as a shelf for the little workmen whose labors you see on the walls.

"These are papered simply with the rough brown paper, which is agreeable in tone, and answers for a background, as you see." As a background only, that was evident. The walls were a picture gallery, in which nothing was disdained. Here were Christmas greetings—large gayly colored pictures from The London Graphic—cuts out of the illustrated papers, grave, gay, lively, severe—anything, everything that struck the childish fancy. Not the least interesting were the original designs, and a box of paints on the wooden shelf below disclosed that a young artist had been recently at work. It had been an earnest but futile endeavor to represent three cats sitting on the ridge pole of a house, and the title underneath, in crooked print, indicated that the work was to be a fine satire on "A Thomas Concert."

"Now, you will see how insidious, so to speak, is my system of education. Personally, I never had any perseverance, and I have felt, more than I am going to tell you,

what an imperfect creature I am in consequence. I don't want my children to indulge my vice, neither do I believe that nagging sweetens their dispositions. Now, as Bob has undertaken his work of art on the wall-paper, every time he enters the room he will see that it is unfinished. His conscience is still young and tender, and some fine day, to get back his peace of mind, although he

Bob undertook that of baby. There were sittings prolonged, until baby rebelled, and Bob grew cross. The work was then abandoned, and a most ghastly attempt at the human countenance stared from the wall. Bob was unhappy. I would see him sit still for some seconds, and glare at baby. He was, in fact, taking notes. One day we were surprised to find the portrait done. The

only points of resemblance, you see, are that refractory lock, which will tumble over his forehead, and his right ear, that stands out straight in spite of all we can do. But the great point was gained—the portrait was finished.

"On the blackboard in the corner you see Tot's portrait of Bob. You have seen it before. It must be, I think, the rudimentary man, for it persists in every child's consciousness. I drew him that way at Tot's age, and so doubtless did you. We couldn't do without the blackboard in the nursery. There is always some scrawl on it of the little ones. But I like the older ones to use paint and the wall. Why? Because they can't undo their work, and it teaches them to be careful to think before they act.

"As you see, the walls are pretty well covered. Before we go back to town, the children will have to hunt for space. You perceive now the advantage of these cheap stuffs. Before we come back next spring the Mother Goose dado will be scraped off and something new take its place, and the walls will have another covering of brown paper ready for fresh endeavors.

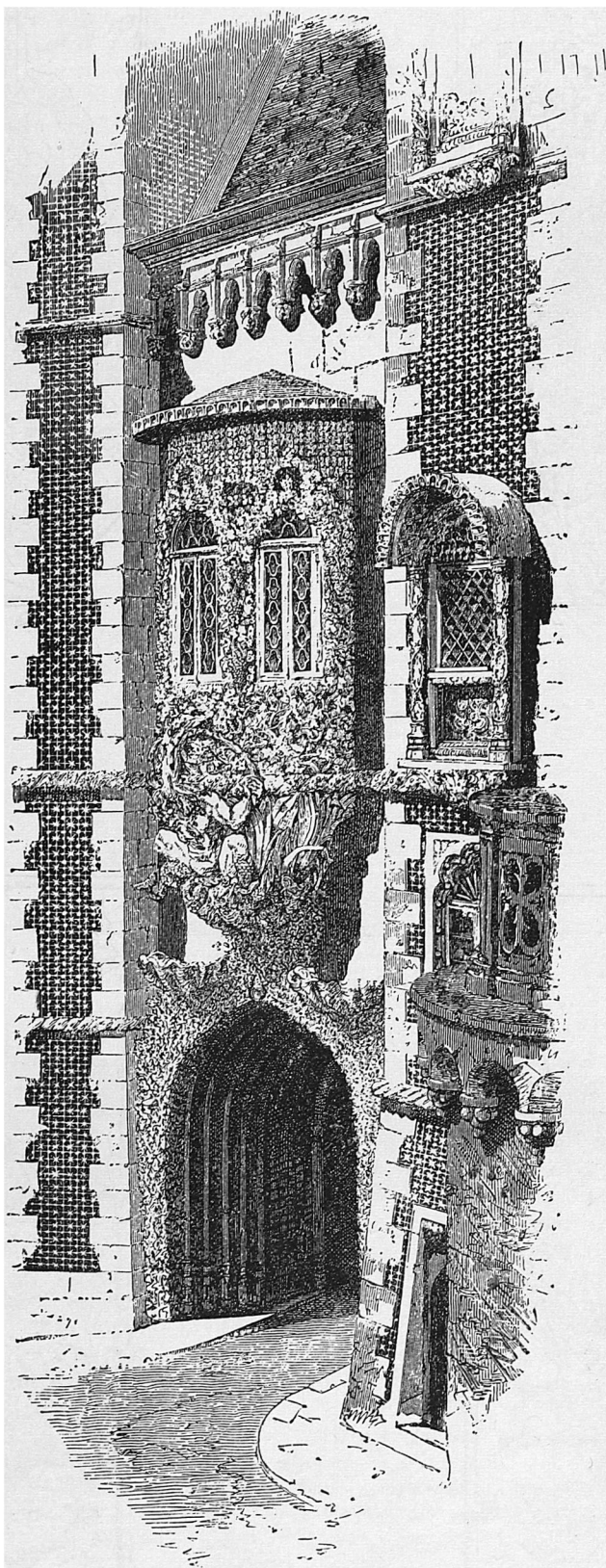
"The frieze, you see, is permanent, and the result of the most serious consideration. The designs are taken from old English poetry, history and legend. There are Robin Hood and his Men, St. George and the Dragon, the Children in the Tower, King Alfred baking cakes, Fair Rosamond—the same old stories we have all heard over and over again in our childhood. They are divided, as you see, by ornamental designs. These also have been carefully selected. The grotesquerie of mediæval ornament and the fancies of the Renaissance prevail.

"I have a friend who believes that only beautiful forms should be put before children. But I never found anything that stimulated my imagination like grotesque ornament. The delights of a transformation scene are no greater than to follow an efflorescence until it changes into the body of a dragon, or to discover a wonderful flower having a griffin's hind legs. It cultivates one's sense of humor, too, and that I hold to be very important.

"But to return to the stories of the frieze; one of my hobbies is that children shouldn't be told too much. Not one of those stories has ever been told the children. They make up their own stories. But the books which give the more authentic versions are always about, and when by chance they are read, and two and two are put together, imagine their delight. Esther and Bob will never forget several such experiences.

"But here, Tottie, come tell the lady about the little boy on the horse." Tottie was a blue-eyed little maid who had just come in. Bringing an oblong looking-glass, Tottie sat down in her willow rocking-chair, holding the glass so it reflected St. George and the Dragon of the frieze, and began:

"Once there was a little boy, and his Uncle Jack gave him a beautiful pony named Julia Mary Palmer. One day he went to take his Aunt Virginia Middleton a— a— glancing around inquiringly— "a pair of slippers. An' he rode, an' he rode, an' he rode until he come to a great big room roo that laid in the middle of the road. Then the room roo said in a funny kind of voice, like baby



ENTRANCE TO THE CHÂTEAU DE LA PENNA (PORTUGAL).

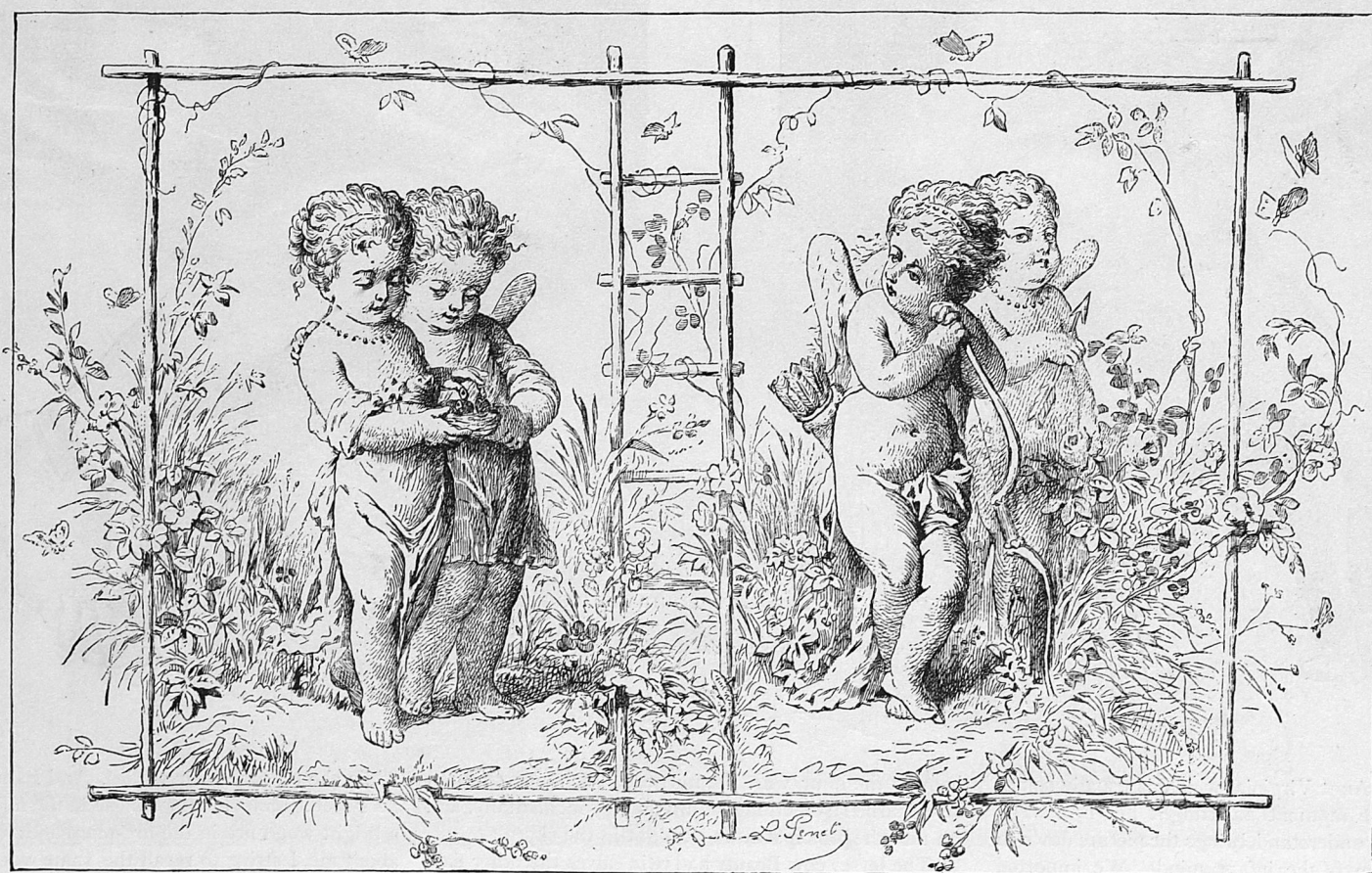
DRAWN FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

has never spoken of it, he will get up on a chair and finish it as well as he can, and then whistle like a blackbird all the rest of the day, which, we will hope, will be spent. I study my children, and I have seen Bob discipline himself before. Do you see that remarkable work by the window? You may not recognize it, but it is the portrait of baby. I was having my portrait painted, so











when she has the croup, 'Little boy, give me the slippers for gloves to wear to Sunday-school?' An' the little boy he said, 'I can't, good rooom roo; they're for Aunt Virginia Middelium, who's got cold feet.' Then the rooom roo got mad, and would have knocked the little boy off his pony, but Julia Mary Palmer took her paw and punched his eyes out, and the rooom roo fell over killed dead. An' that's all. Mamma, mayn't I go with Bob to the stable?"

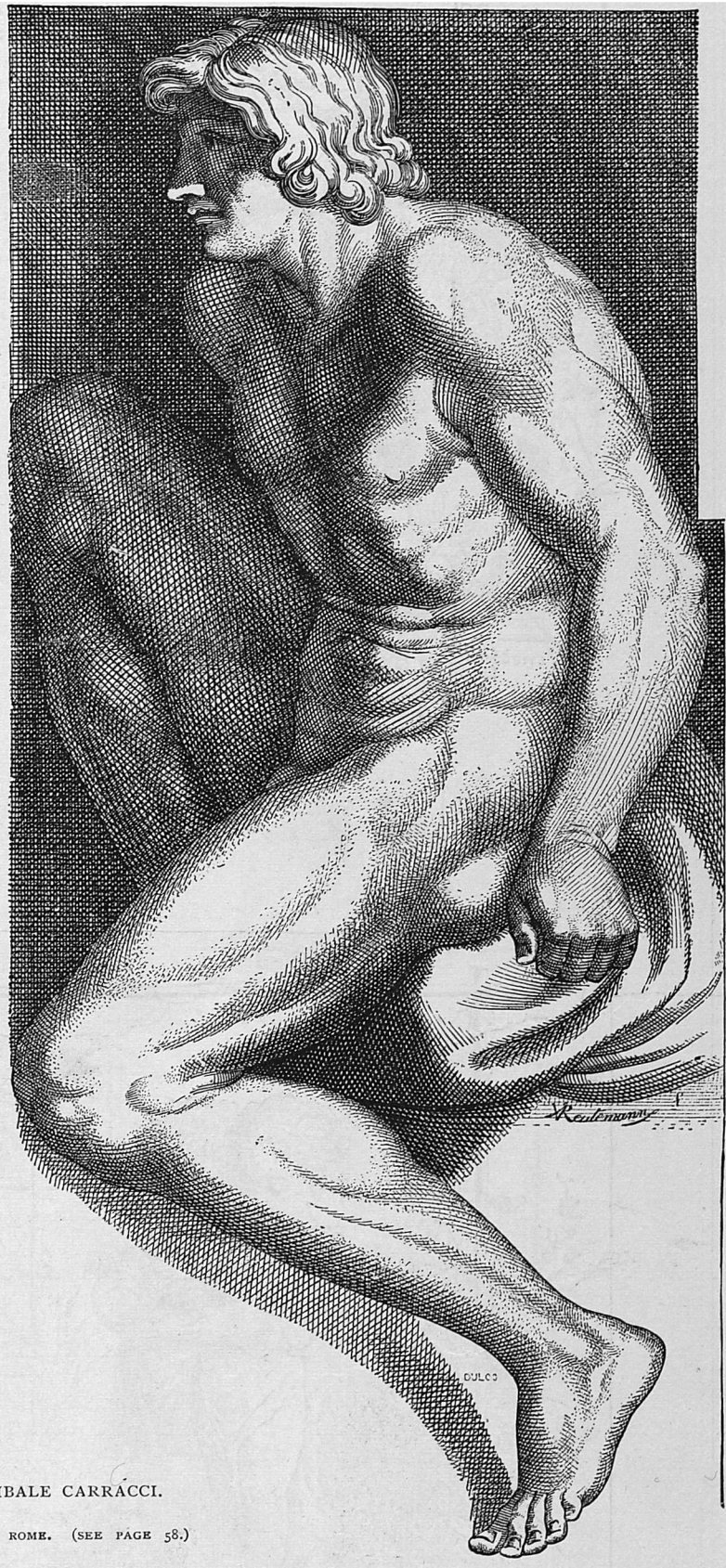
"It is needless to say," said the young mother, "Tot-tie has told this story before, and it is always the same,

pest is then soon over. To be sure, Bob once struck his fist at the glass when he was shown himself in a rage. But then, in breaking the glass he cut his fist, and the lesson was not lost. Oh, I assure you the looking-glass is one of the most important agencies in a perfect civilization.

"Have you looked at the ceiling? Do you recognize it? It is taken from the Celestial map, such as we all used to study. There are all the familiar constellations—Orion, the Great Bear, Cassiopeia. The tinting, you observe, helps the children to define them. They study

It was indeed a very clever piece of work. The ground-  
ing was deep blue, and the constellations lighter in tint, each slightly varying, the outlines being traced lightly in black, while the stars were of course gilt. To the casual observer the ceiling had only a cloudy blue effect, with gold stars and a sense of the tracery, all of which resulted in a certain tone in keeping with the rest of the room.

"The tiles around the fire-place, as you have noticed, are old Dutch Scripture tiles, not their imitation. I bought those in Holland myself. They are exactly like those I remember as a child leaning against my mother's knee,



DECORATIVE FIGURES. BY ANNIBALE CARRACCI.

IN THE GALLERY OF THE FARNESE PALACE, ROME. (SEE PAGE 58.)

except the gift to Aunt Virginia, which is usually something that for the moment has caught her eye. The looking-glass, you understand, brings the picture down to the comprehension of the infant mind. We imported that idea from Rome. But the looking-glass in the way of discipline is all my own idea. When one of the babies gets in a tantrum she is led up to the glass in the door of the cabinet there and shown her distorted visage. She gets so interested she forgets to cry. Many a time I have seen them run up to the glass themselves, in the midst of a passion, to see how their faces look. Of course the tem-

them by the hour with the mirror. The older children have learned something of mythology incidentally, and can find the principal stars at night in the sky.

"The Jersey cow Beauty had twin calves the other day. Bob and Esther wanted them called Castor and Pollux, but in deference to their sex we persuaded the children to accept Cassy and Polly.

"But I had to work to get it. At first the men said it would be impossible to do such a ceiling and keep it in harmony with the rest of the room. But when woman wills, you know."

while she told me their stories. And I assure you I have no sweeter moments than those in the fall when we have a bright wood fire in the fire-place and, with my children about me, I strive to recall the same words that I heard from my mother's lips so long ago. I have the greatest faith in early associations as a safeguard in later years, and for that reason I wish all the associations between my children and myself to be lovely, and such that they will delight to recall. And for similar reasons," she laughed gaily, "I never hear their lessons or take any apparent part in their prescribed studies. There is too much

necessary friction there, and I am painfully conscious that both I and my children have a great deal of human nature to the square inch. I know that these are heterodox views. I have a friend, a woman of wealth and position, who regards it a thing beautiful and becoming in a mother to hear the infant lessons. I have witnessed that performance. It was neither beautiful nor becoming. At the end of an hour both mother and child were ready to scratch one another's eyes out. No, thank you, not while I can find competent teachers.

"Do you see this niche lined with tiles in the mantel-piece? That is Esther's kitchen. Here is her stove. I assure you it bakes; and there are her pots and pans. To cook is a natural and laudable desire on the part of a girl, and this is much better than musing in the kitchen to the distraction of the cook. Sometimes we come in, and she bakes us griddle cakes, and very deftly, I assure you.

"The floor, you see, is handsomely inlaid around the border. Certainly I prefer rugs to any carpet on the score of health and cleanliness, but I have also another reason. They are always available in the making of play-houses. Sometimes I come in here and find the children living in tents on the desert. The other day they were cast away in the Arctic regions, and, although it was one of those hot muggy rainy days, they were wrapped in those fur rugs. Give children the points of the compass, and they will discover unknown lands.

"I don't discard more æsthetic training. You see those large photographs of holy families by Perugino, and the young Raphael, and those singing children from the reliefs of Luca della Robbia in the Bargello at Florence? Those always hang here. The Japanese panels I change from time to time. I never have any doubt in giving them anything Japanese. To me those flowers, in freshness and vitality, are only surpassed by Nature.

"You haven't spoken of my windows, but I am sure you can't have been oblivious to all this flood of vari-colored light. The upper panels are Japanese designs in stained glass. Of course you can't make them out—not immediately, at least. Ah, my friend, that is the secret of their charm. The color, you admit, is delightful. Well, if you studied them long enough, you would discern in one a landscape. There is a little cot, a grove, a river in the distance and very red fusi-yama. In another is a branch of cherry blossoms and some thriving birds. In the third is a tree with some pheasants beneath and a bush of peonies. The fourth is a face in a crescent moon looking down on a moonlight-landscape. You have no idea what a joy that window is to the children. For the lower sash are screens of single-paned glass, red, blue, green, purple, amber. Many a time, coming in from the lawn, have I seen the little faces pressed up close to the window, making strange new worlds out of the old one through the colored glass. That is a childish experience you doubtless remember, as I do.

"The great secret of pleasure in life—I suppose I ought to say is in doing one's duty, but I don't mean to say it—the great secret of happiness in life lies in what we give to external things, not in what they give to us.

'My mind to me a kingdom is'

My heartiest wish for my children is that they may realize in themselves the poet's thought."

MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

THE decorative rage has reached the Italian quarter. The misanthrope in Chatham Square who manufactures hand organs is now turning them out with painted panels and Japanese panels of perforated wood.

THE trade in Japonaiserie does not seem to languish, notwithstanding the hard times. One local house recently sold to a single customer, a lady well known in New York society, over \$60,000 worth in one bill. The forty pieces of Japanese tapestry ordered for one room in the mansion of another customer cost him \$20,000. A sale of which one of the traders in bric-à-brac lately boasted was that of a little blue jar, which his agent had picked up for fifty cents, and which he sold, after carrying it in his pocket for a few days to exhibit as an example of beautiful color, for \$4.50.

THE two figures illustrated on page 56 form part of the decoration of the Farnese Palace in Rome. In that important work, for which he was meanly requited, Annibale Carracci was at first assisted by his brother Agostino, better known as an engraver than as a painter.

Many of his paintings are in England, eight of the best being in the National Gallery. While his work is marked by uncommon vigor and evident striving for truth, it is often marred by mannerisms. From this fault the examples we have selected for illustration are, happily, free. Annibale, however, greatly excelled in artistic ability his brother Agostino and his cousin Lodovico, founder of the leading Eclectic School of Italy. He was born in 1560 and died in 1609.

#### OLD-FASHIONED FLOWER-PAINTING.

WHILE we would not, without reserve, commend them for imitation, it is easy to admire the faithful, painstaking qualities of the famous Dutch flower-painter, Van Huysum, an example of whose work is illustrated on page 57. It was the fashion of his day to represent every petal of every flower in a bouquet, to show every dew-drop on the petal, and every insect which might be drinking from the dew-drop; and, as if this were not enough, a bird's nest or so, having nothing to do with the bouquet, might, at discretion, be added to the already crowded composition. Even the pedestal holding the vase could not be let alone, but it was necessary to introduce a snail crawling up its side. This, in our day, would be considered bad art. We are all more or less influenced by the teachings of the impressionists, and those who are the least so, would, perhaps, insist that, as we do not look at nature through a magnifying glass, it is hardly the province of the painter to show us trifling matters of detail which would escape ordinary observation. But with all this minutiae, trivial as it may be, is not such a picture as this by Van Huysum infinitely preferable to the scamped work of the average "clever" American flower-painter of to-day, whose roses look as if they had been cut out of carrots and turnips, and whose dauby "breadth of handling" is merely a convenient mask to conceal his technical shortcomings? There is no shirking in the work of this honest Dutchman; every flower and every leaf and every insect—the flower of animal life—has been thoroughly studied, and given its proper form and characteristic, and if the original picture could be seen, it would be found, in all particulars, true in regard to color. Who shall say but that before long we shall go back to the style of the Dutch masters in our flower-pictures, reviving at least the practice of their good qualities? In figure-painting Meissonier is held by many in the very highest esteem as an artist, although he does no better with his miniature work than did many of the Dutch and Flemish artists centuries before him. Why should there not be a Meissonier in flower-painting? He may yet arise and set anew the fashion of conscientious study in that most charming department of still life.

### Bric-à-Brac.

#### TRICKS AND MISTAKES OF DEALERS.

THE way of the collector is hard, especially if he allows his passion to become a serious one without acquiring, at the same time, an adequate amount of knowledge of the subject of his hobby. If his taste be for old porcelain, he is apt to pay a high price because of the grayness of the paste left exposed at the bottom of a vase, only to find, when he gets home, that it is due to a mixture of India ink and ignoble modern dust. If he cares for old works in metal, he must beware of the art of the electrotyper, of which some wonderful examples, that might deceive even experts, are now on view at the Metropolitan Museum. If he likes jap-trap, Birmingham and Sixth Avenue, Houston Street and Berlin, are ready to supply him, to say nothing of the potteries of Williamsburg and Perth Amboy and Cincinnati. If he loves antique wrought iron he can be furnished with any amount of it, brand-new, from Amsterdam, Venice or Paterson, N. J. In Vienna they make a specialty of reproducing old carvings in rock crystal; Florence reproduces seventeenth century arms and armor; the great English potteries copy the *pâte tendre* of Sèvres, the decorated ware of Bernard Palissy, and attempt, but with very little success, to imitate the metallic reflections of old Moorish and Italian faïences. Berlin and Copenhagen produce classic vases and amphoræ; Rotterdam the old East India Company porcelains; and the trade of making ante-Gothic silverware is reported upon excellent authority to flourish surprisingly all through the kingdom of Hanover.

It should be understood that there is comparatively little counterfeiting actually done with the intent to deceive; but there is an immense deal of repairing, refurbishing, imitating and copying, and most of the articles thus mended, patched together or made after the antique find their way into the trade, and often pass from hand to hand a good deal among the dealers before they reach a permanent home. Under these circumstances, the dealers themselves are often taken in, especially as it is their interest at times to be so. The large class of intermediaries (especially numerous in New York and Boston) who buy on commission are in general very well acquainted with the clever workmen of the French quarter and the repairers of Sixth Avenue. It must not be supposed that these latter gentlemen confine themselves to the sort of work that one sees in their windows and show-cases—ten-penny chimney ornaments or broken Delft platters stuck together with a little plaster of Paris or cement. They are capable, some of them at least, of much finer work. Bring to one of them something of value that you have accidentally damaged. The first question that he will ask is whether you wish the repair to show, or the contrary. You can have almost anything made or mended in New York and so that it will be difficult to tell it from a genuine and perfectly preserved article of its kind. Lacquer ware—when it is not necessary to imitate the better sort of decorations—gold and silverware, and jewelry of any sort; bronzes—the ring and specific gravity of metal of any composition can be reproduced as well as the patina; embroideries; bindings of books—all these things can be "fixed up" and made over to look as good as the old. We have some excellent ivory carvers, who sell their copies, as such, for sixty to one hundred dollars a little statuette. But their work may easily be cracked and stained after it leaves their hands. We have plenty of good cabinet-makers perfectly able to make what appear to be two old pieces of furniture out of the remains of one. A great deal of this work is done for dealers and agents, who give it to their customers without guarantee as to age or condition. Most buyers are perfectly contented to have something that looks old, or that is in part old—they do not care how much. They themselves often have old pieces fixed up, either for use or because they think they look better. After a time they die or fail, or grow tired of their collection, and it goes back to the dealers. It is hard to hold these responsible for what they have had no share in doing. They may see that a thing has been repaired or that it is a copy, and they may not; but once it is theirs, it is to their interest not to perceive its faults. Everybody knows how that acts. The dealer is often more thoroughly deceived than the buyer.

There are only two lines of action open to a sensible man who would make a collection of objects of art. If he cares simply to surround himself with things that are artistic, he may confine himself to modern work, the authenticity of which can, in general, be easily established. If he has a leaning toward the work of some past period, he had better narrow his field as much as possible, and study it thoroughly. The best aid he can get will be from conscientious and well-informed dealers; but these do not know everything; and if a man will go in for making several collections at once, he is bound to find it a laborious and expensive form of amusement. Still, that is what most people are sure to do in the beginning. Hence, it may be well to offer a few suggestions in addition to what *The Art Amateur* printed on this subject last year. As all the arts of counterfeiting and falsifying are practised in their perfection in France, the following remarks are mostly drawn from French writers upon this curious and interesting subject.

As to imported goods, it is well to be sceptical in the matter of legends and family histories; not only that, but to resolutely shut your ears to them if you mean to buy, for often the clever salesman will remember an entertaining story about some object of the same sort as that which you have in view, and contrive that you, not he, shall associate it with the latter. A salesman who is not clever enough for that is generally less scrupulous, and, to an ignorant buyer, is more dangerous. Men of this sort have been known, in their employers' absence, to bronze over old iron-work in the hope that it might pass for antique gilding, to have old blue and white porcelain re-decorated with gold lines at a China painter's, to sell Indian work for Chinese, soapstone for jade and Derbyshire spar for alabaster.

Beware of Sèvres, *pâte tendre*; there is extremely little of it in existence, and more is sold now than ever before. A piece that was rejected by the old decorators, one of